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Senate

The Senate was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Monday, December 9, 2013, at 2 p.m.

House of Representatives

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2013

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. LAMALFA).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
December 3, 2013.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DOUG LAMALFA to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2013, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, Congress returns for the final days of

this year's session facing the same conundrum: people here and back home are divided over the direction of our government; they don't agree on how to fund what a growing and aging America needs.

A year ago, we were engaged in a vigorous debate on taxation. More recently, we survived the controversy surrounding the government shutdown, and we still are at loggerheads.

There are strong feelings by some that now is not the time to raise taxes, yet the spending levels enshrined in the House budget cannot produce spending bills from the Appropriations Committee that can actually pass on the House floor. In some cases, they appear to not even be able to pass from subcommittee. All the while, we are looking at a sea of unmet needs and face a floundering economy.

There is one area that can help break the logjam. It won't solve all of our problems certainly, but it will help us significantly along the way. Congress should address the critical needs of our Nation's infrastructure deficit. Roads, bridges, transit systems are all increasingly at risk. We are facing an inadequate state of repair, construction of new facilities are on hold, and we are losing ground in meeting our own needs, let alone the challenges of global competition. Yet this challenge is an opportunity for some potential progress. We know what to do to meet this challenge. We can write a new transportation bill that will meet today's needs; it just needs more money.

There is a vast coalition that supports additional resources for infra-

structure. The so-called "special interests" that are so often at odds are remarkably aligned when it comes time to recognize and fix this problem. Business, labor, professional groups, local government, environmentalists, truckers, bicyclists all agree.

The paralysis that surrounds questions of raising taxes does not necessarily need to apply in this case. Ronald Reagan, after all, was willing to sign into law a 5 cent gasoline tax increase 31 years ago when a nickel a gallon was real money. A user fee is, in fact, a different category from a general tax increase. The various groups that score such votes treat user fees differently.

As we are attempting to resolve budget differences, there is an opportunity to embrace more transportation resources through user fee mechanisms that will have broad national support and not inspire the same fierce philosophical debate that has plagued and paralyzed our deliberations for years. It has the added benefit of being the fastest way to put hundreds of thousands of people to work at family-wage jobs to help boost our flagging economy.

I strongly urge my colleagues to take a step back and look at this as a way to crack the code, to meet vast unmet needs of our constituents and stabilize a critical part of our budget. Who knows, if we can find a way to thread this particular transportation funding needle, how many additional opportunities to solve problems going forward can we then address?

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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